

NWSA 2014: "Feminist Transgressions"

Theme #1: "Rethinking the Nation"

Panel Title: Refiguring Normativity: Rethinking the Role of the Nation in Regulating Desirable Subjectivities and Possibilities for Resistance

Rationale:

The Nation-State is adept at implementing adaptive practices to counteract challenges to its normalizing ideology and authority. This panel engages with the conference theme "Rethinking the Nation" in different geographical and theoretical locales by exploring the ways marginalized groups challenge and resist the nation-state's official rhetoric of tolerance and neutrality. Intended to "modernize" the nation, policy, legislation, and government regulation does more to reinforce the binary between "progressive" and more traditional, conservative nations than it does to challenge normalizing discourses. These papers highlight the inconsistencies of specific nation-state policies, both explicit and facially neutral, that purport to promote impartiality, but in practice perpetuate discrimination against historically marginalized groups. Panelists examine strategies including the criminalization of prostitution and heightened surveillance of red light districts, as well as policies like "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," proposed legislation such as the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and discreet censorship of social media outlets, to explore how the State's efforts toward progressive politics actually augments the marginalization of certain groups. Turning to counternarratives and social media communities, we find spaces of resistance where individuals speak back to the State and challenge its normalizing efforts. The panel contributes to existing dialogues on homonormativity, the hypersurveillance of certain populations through urban planning policies, and the State's use of ideological apparatuses to normalize certain types of citizenship by minimizing relevant differences.

Sara Rodríguez-Argüelles

Title: Sex-money-love: Resistance strategies

Abstract:

The law is in great measure responsible for the reproduction and reinforcement of heteronormative notions in society. It is through policies, media and public discourse, that the US depicts the exchange of sex for money as a crime. By analyzing counter narrative stories of the experiences of some migrant women, we discover sex, love, money, kinship, desire and other social institutions embedded, both in society and in the individual. These experiences not only challenge normative ideas but symbolize women's resistance against the nation-state.

Erin Tobin

Title: Refashioning the Nation through Homopositive Law and Legislation: The Normalizing Impacts of the ENDA and the Repeal of DADT

Abstract:

The 2011 repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the 2013 Senate vote to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act mark two moments in the refashioning of the United States as a “modern” nation by normalizing the acceptance of homosexuality. This paper examines government and media discussions of the policies, as well as progressive resistance toward their negative repercussions. I argue that DADT and ENDA do not actually challenge heteronormativity embedded in U.S. discourse. Instead, they refashion the nation through homopositive rhetoric that reinscribes the binary between the United States as a progressive nation and other nations as oppressive.

Joshua Bates

Title: Pleasure and Pain: The Construction and Criminalization of the Red Light District

Abstract:

Urban form both organically develops out of the collective will of a population and is formally planned to meet the needs of the society from which it appears. What then do we make of the existence of red light districts: non-normative, sexually “deviant” spaces that are ubiquitous across urban locales? Through an analysis of planning policy in a number of United States’ cities, I will show how red light districts are both simultaneously—and necessarily—constructed and criminalized.